

**Testimony of Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs  
Before the Environment Committee  
January 30, 2023**

***in support of HB No. 6484***

**AAC THE HAND-HARVESTING OF HORSESHOE CRABS IN THE STATE**

Thank you Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, Vice-Chairs Senator Hochadel and Representative Palm, Ranking Members Senator Harding and Representative Callahan, and all honorable members of the Environment Committee for this opportunity to testify on HB 6484.

The Nature Conservancy in CT (TNC) expresses support for HB-6484.

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. That mission has taken us to conserving the ecosystem and wildlife species of Long Island Sound for which we have dedicated considerable attention in the last 10 years and more. We have learned about the ecological importance of one of the oldest creatures to inhabit the Sound: horseshoe crabs. In addition to being intrinsically valuable in their own right, these animals play a role in the food webs and other ecological processes of the Sound. That role has been diminished in modern times by the decline of these species.

It is important to sustain the horseshoe crab for ecological reasons and help in its recovery by limiting human harvest. If there is to be a practical future benefit of these animals for potential human use that will also be better served if horseshoe crab populations can recover and be sustainable. But we are nowhere near that status.

We are impressed and concerned that horseshoe crabs are used as bait despite other options for fishers when the population is already well below what is needed to assure its sustainability no less recovery to where it can begin to play a greater beneficial overall ecological role in Long Island Sound. We understand that Connecticut's quota for its annual allowed haul is 48,689 individuals. This number is clearly too high when the goal is to restore, not aggravate the danger of losing this important species. That number is further concerning when we take into account poaching.

With both ecological and human interests in mind we support HB-6484.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.